

Message Text

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R 062104Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9037

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY NASSAU

AMCONSUL BELIZE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT OF SPAIN 0870

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EINT, PORC, SEDU, XL, TD

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER WILLIAMS CRITICIZES CARICOM MEETING

REF: PORT OF SPAIN 0831

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. SPEAKING AT A POLITICAL MEETING IN SOUTH TRINIDAD ON APRIL 3, PRIME MINISTER ERIC WILLIAMS SHARPLY CRITICIZED THE RECENT CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF THE CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM) IN TRINIDAD. HE CHARACTERIZED THE RESOLUTION OF EDUCATION ADOPTED AT THE MEETING AS "INNOCUOUS" AND SAID THAT TRINIDAD HAD AGREED TO NOTHING AT THE CONFERENCE BECAUSE "THERE WAS NOTHING TO AGREE TO." DR. WILLIAMS SAID THAT THE CONFERENCE MAY NOT HAVE BEEN A "BLOOMING WASTE OF TIME," BUT THAT HE COULD HAVE SPENT HIS TIME ON MORE IMPORTANT MATTERS.

2. REFERRING TO THE EFFORTS OF HIS COLLEAGUES TO
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DISCUSS FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS WHICH WERE NOT ON THE

AGENDA, DR. WILLIAMS ACCUSED THEM OF ATTEMPTING TO BRING IN NEW ISSUES "THROUGH THE BACK DOOR." HE SAID THAT THE TRINIDAD CABINET HAD NOT ITSELF DISCUSSED THE ISSUES (CARICOM POSITIONS ON RECOGNITION OF ANGOLA, SPORTING CONTACTS WITH RHODESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA, AND AID TO MOZAMBIQUE) AND WAS NOT IN A POSITION TO PARTICIPATE IN FORMAL TALKS OR JOIN IN DECISIONS ON THESE SUBJECTS. HE ADDED THAT HE OPPOSED POLITICAL INTERFERENCE IN SPORT AND WOULD NOT TAKE PART IN AN "ASSASSINATION" OF WEST INDIES CRICKET.

3. ON THE SUBJECT OF EDUCATION RESOLUTION ITSELF, DR. WILLIAMS SAID THAT WHEN THE RESOLUTION CAME BEFORE THE MEETING, ONE OF ITS PROPONENTS, PRIME MINISTER MANLEY, WAS ABSENT AND ANOTHER, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM, WAS PRESENT ONLY FOR THE FINAL FEW MINUTES. DR. WILLIAMS STATED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS IN THE REGION WOULD BE LOWERED. HE DISPARAGED ATTEMPTS TO GET THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA INTEGRATED INTO THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES (UWI) SYSTEM. DURING THE CONFERENCE, HE SAID, PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM HAD NOT GIVEN THE SLIGHTEST INDICATION WHETHER HE FELT IT WAS DESIRABLE OR POSSIBLE TO INTEGRATE HIS COUNTRY'S UNIVERSITY INTO THE REGIONAL SYSTEM. DR. WILLIAMS RECALLED THAT HE HAD SPOKEN ABOUT THE MATTER SOME YEARS AGO TO BURNHAM AND THEN-PREMIER CHEDDI JAGAN AND: "I CANNOT TELL YOU WHICH ONE WAS LESS COOPERATIVE." HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE ENTRY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA WERE LOWER THAN THOSE FOR UWI. END UNCLASSIFIED.

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4. COMMENT: WILLIAMS' PUBLIC STATEMENT, FOLLOWING ON HIS PERFORMANCE AT THE CONFERENCE, WILL NO DOUBT EXACERBATE HIS ALREADY STRAINED RELATIONS WITH OTHER CARICOM LEADERS. HIS OUTSPOKENNESS AND UNWILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE JUST TO PRESERVE APPEARANCES ARE, HOWEVER, COMPLETELY IN CHARACTER AND CANNOT HAVE SURPRISED HIS CONFIDENTIAL

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CARICOM COUNTERPARTS. THE CONFERENCE DID POINT UP THE GROWING IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES AMONG THE BIG FOUR OF CARICOM AND, AS A "CONFERENCE SOURCE" QUOTED IN "CARIBBEAN CONTACT" SAID, THE RESULTS OF THE CONFERENCE "EMPHASIZED HOW VERY MUCH DIVIDED WE STILL ARE." EMBASSY IS BEGINNING TO RECEIVE CONFIRMING COMMENTS FROM T&T GOVERNMENT SOURCES TO THE EFFECT THAT THE CARICOM SUMMIT WAS A RATHER DEVISIVE EXPERIENCE.

WITH BOTH JAMAICA AND GUYANA BEGINNING TO ERECT
INTRA-CARICOM TRADE BARRIERS WHILE STILL EXPECTING
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO TO BUY THEIR PRODUCTS IN
PREFERENCE TO THOSE FROM EXTERNAL SOURCES, EVEN
THE ECONOMIC FABRIC OF CARICOM SEEMS TO BE UNDER
SERIOUS STRAIN.
FAY

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